Study Notes Perils of Infants Born of Incest

The terrible inheritances of children born of incest has been documented by an unusual study of such offspring.

The fates of infants born of four father-daughter relationships and 12 brother-sister unions were investigated. Only seven of the resulting 18 babies were physically and mentally normal.

Dr. Morton S. Adams, of the National Institute of Dental Research, Bethesda, reported the findings to a recent research seminar for science writers at the National Institutes of Health.

The study, he said, was conducted by the department of human genetics, University of Michigan. All of the involved pairs were Michigan residents.

The results more than confirmed the well-established beliefs of the hazards of blood-related matings, Dr. Adams said. A follow-up study on a larger scale is planned, he added.

Results of the incestuous unions, he reported, showed: Two of the infants died within 24 hours of birth, and a third died later of an inheritable disease. Two suffered cerebral palsy and were so severely retarded mentally as to be institutionalized, probably for the rest of their lives.

Four others showed mental retardation, but to a lesser degree. One had a cleft lip; another a dislocated hip.

Dr. Adams pointed out that in first cousin matings a gene, the unit of inheritance, has a 1-in-16 chance of being paired to a similar gene producing recessive traits. In father-daughter or brother-sister relationships, the chances of such gene pairings are 1 in 4.

The studies made and planned are unrelated to other genetic studies underway at the National Institute for Dental Research in the search for the clues to teeth and oral disorders which may or may not be inherited.

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